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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
TEST ACT, &c.

[SHERLOCK (THOMAS)]

T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F T H E
T E S T A C T :
IN WHICH THE
MISTAKES in fomer late WRITINGS
againſt it are rectified,
AND THE
IMPORTANCE of it to the CHURCH
explained.

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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
TEST ACT, &c.

IN some late Writings on the Side of the Dissenters, great Merit is ascribed to Alderman *Love*, one of the Members of Parliament for the City of *London*, on Account of a Declaration he is said to have made, while the Test Act was under the Consideration of the House of Commons. It was to this Effect, That though he was aware the Dissenters must be included in it, he would not oppose so necessary an Act against *Popery*; but that, when it was passed, some Regard, if the House pleased, might be had to Protestant Dissenters. *The Bill*, says Mr. *Neal*, in his Preface to the *History of the Puritans*,

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*Puritans, was voted accordingly, and another brought in For the Ease of his Majesty's Protestant Subjects; which passed the Commons, but before it could get through the Lords, the King came to the House and prorogued the Parliament. Thus, continues he, the Protestant Non-Conformists, out of their abundant Zeal for the Protestant Religion, shackled themselves, and were left upon a Level with Popish Recusants. And another of their Writers, having given an Account of passing the Test Act in the Year 1673, immediately adds, In the Year 1680, a Bill passed both Houses of Parliament, for exempting his Majesty's Protestant Subjects from certain Penalties, but when the King came to the House to pass the Bills, this Bill was taken from the Table, and never heard of more. — Another Piece lately written on the same Side, takes it for granted that the Bill so withdrawn, was a Repeal of the Test Act as to Protestant Dissenters; for thus he argues: Was it once thought a proper Time by both Houses of Parliament, in such a Reign as that of King Charles the Second; and shall it be said there is no Time proper in the present Reign? And that this Fact passes current among the Dissenters, we may gather from the Strefs that is laid upon it by the Chairman of their late General Assembly, in the Vindication of his Speech: *The Dissenters,**

Dissenters, says he, only pray to be restored to their Birth-right, which Birth-right they waived, to purchase the Safety of this (the Church's) Establishment, and this too at a Time when in imminent Danger. Which the then Parliament was so sensible of, that a Bill for the Relief of the Protestant Dissenters was brought in, and passed both Houses, but practised away, when it should have had the Royal Assent.

There is a small Mistake in this last Account : The passing the Test Act, and the withdrawing the Bill for Relief of the Dissenters were Transactions five Years distant from each other, and in different Parliaments. But though we suppose all the four Accounts to be *true* in Substance, yet as the Facts are connected and applied, they mislead Readers into a Belief of what is very *untrue*, *i. e.* that they are Evidences of a continued *Desire* and *Endeavour* in both Houses of Parliament from the Time of passing the Test Act, to relieve the Dissenters from the Inconveniencies of it ; and that they had succeeded in it, if their Endeavours had not been disappointed by the Artifices of the Court. Whereas the Truth is, That though in the remaining Part of that Reign, the Attempts they refer to and others of the like Kind were made in Favour of the Dissenters, sometimes in the House of Lords, and
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at other Times in the House of Commons ; yet no one of those Attempts had any Relation to the Test Act, nor any Design to exempt them from the Disabilities of it, in order to make them capable of Offices in the State. The great Aim of those Endeavours, was to procure them an Exemption from the Penalties of the Laws which rested upon *them* in common with the Papists ; the Penalties for not coming to Church and conforming to the established Worship ; and the Laws enacting those Penalties, from which they have *already* a full and total Exemption by the Act of Toleration.

I am far from charging the forecited Writers, or any others who have mentioned those Laws on the Side of the Dissenters, with an *Intention* to mislead their Readers. On the contrary, I am very sensible that themselves might easily be misled, by connecting the *Titles* of the Bills as they are mentioned in our common Historians, with that Story of Alderman *Love* ; without consulting the Records of Parliament to see what the real Tenor of the Bills was. But since these Things are now under publick Consideration, it may be of some Service to have that Matter rightly understood ; for according as the Facts come out, it is a Point of great Weight on one Side or the other ; and we see the Dissenters consider
it

it as such. If these Attempts in their Favour, between the passing the Test Act and the Revolution, were *designed* to relieve them *against* that Act, it is an Argument that the Lords and Commons of those Days judged it a Thing *fit* and *reasonable* to be done. But if in that Period, the great Business of the two Houses was to procure them an *Exemption* from the *Penal Laws*, and if, notwithstanding that visible Concern for the Dissenters, and those Testimonies of Zeal for their Service, neither House did once *attempt* to relieve them in the Point of the Test Act; the Argument will be, That neither House thought it *fit* and *reasonable* to be done. This will show, that both Houses put a just Distinction between the relieving of *Conscience*, and the entitling to Power; the same Distinction that was afterwards made in framing the Act of Toleration, which gives Relief to Conscience, but expressly debars from Temporal Power.

To descend then to those Attempts which are said to have been made in Favour of the Dissenters.

The first was the Bill which one of the forementioned Writers speaks of, and which may *seem* to have a Relation to the Test Act, being brought in immediately upon passing that Act, and entitled, ‘ *For the Ease of his*
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‘ *Majesty’s*

‘ *Majesty’s Protestant Subjects.*’ Whereas the true Design of it was this. The King, in the Interval of Parliament, had published a Declaration bearing Date *March* the 15th, 1671-2, by which he suspended the *Execution of all Penal Laws in Matters Ecclesiastical*, against whatsoever Sort of *Non-Conformists or Recusants*, and also allowed Places of Meeting to Protestant Dissenters, under proper Regulations. When the Parliament met, the Commons presented an Address to the King, in which they represented, ‘ That considering his Declaration of *Indulgence*, they found themselves bound in ‘ Duty to inform him, that Penal Statutes ‘ in Matters Ecclesiastical, could not be ‘ suspended but by Act of Parliament.’ In Consequence of this, the forementioned Bill was brought in, to *Enable* the King to pursue his good Intentions towards Protestant Dissenters, under such Limitations as the Bill prescribed ; but all this with a View to the *Penal Laws* only, and without the least Reference to the Test Act.

The other Bill in Favour of the Dissenters, which had passed both Houses, and was ready for the Royal Assent, but, either by Accident or Design, was not to be found when the King came to the House, is now in the proper Office, and is no more than a Repeal of the Statute made in the 35th of *Elizabeth* ;

Elizabeth ; by which Statute Sectaries of all Denominations were required to attend the Established Worship, and not to repair to Conventicles, under the Penalties therein mentioned ; but neither has this Bill of Repeal the least Eye to the Test Act, or to any Thing of *Temporal Concern*.

In the Year 1680, we find a Resolution in the House of Commons, ‘ That the Statutes made in the Reigns of Queen *Elizabeth* and King *James* the First against Papists, ought not to be extended to Protestant Dissenters’ ; and after that, an Address to the King, ‘ That Dissenters prosecuted upon Penal Statutes against Papists, may be allowed to compound at the Exchequer, without Fees.’ And at the same Time, the Heads of a Bill were prepared, to remove some of the Objections against Conforming, and to exempt those, who after such Objections removed could not conform, from the Penalties of Non-Conformity. But all these, we see, related to the *Penalties* resting upon Dissenters for not conforming to the publick Worship of the Church, and had not the least Relation to the Test Act, or a Capacity for Offices of any kind.

In the same year, the Lords sent down to the Commons a Bill, ‘ To distinguish
B 2 Protestant

Protestant Dissenters from Popish Recusant's; to which many Amendments were made by the Commons. And here, if any where, one would expect to find some Clause for exempting Dissenters from the Disabilities of the Test Act, had it entered into the Thoughts of either House to make a *Distinction* in that Particular. But so far was it from this, that the Bill goes not one Step further, than to pardon and discharge Protestant Dissenters who were then under Persecution upon the Statutes made in the Reigns of Queen *Elizabeth* and King *James* the First, and to exempt them from the Penalties of those Statutes for the Time to come.

It appears by the foregoing Deduction, that the great Point in which the two Houses endeavoured to befriend the Dissenters, from the Time of passing the Test Act and during the Remainder of King *Charles's* Reign, was to ease them of the Penalties of Non-Conformity; which Penalties had been inflicted by former Laws, partly against *them* singly, and partly against them in Conjunction with the Papists, as both agreed in not conforming to the publick Worship. And if in that Period of Time there had been Attempts in either House of Parliament to repeal the *Test Act*, it is not to be supposed, that Writers, who on this Occasion

sion dwell upon Bills which have no Relation to that Act, would have omitted the Mention of Bills which have ; especially at this Juncture, when such Instances might give some Countenance to the present Attempt. But it seems in those Days, the Arguments of *Natural Right*, and the Grievance of *Negative Discouragements*, were not understood ; and it is happy for this Nation that they were not. If they had, and a Repeal of the Test Act had been obtained in that Reign, the Condition of these Kingdoms in the next had been dismal indeed.—When King *James* wanted nothing but the Repeal of that single Act to accomplish his Designs :—When, if it had been repealed to his Hand, Numbers of Places, Civil and Military, might have been filled with Papists, and Persons Popishly affected ; and this carried on agreeably to Law, and without the *fatal* Exercise of a Dispensing Power, in Violation of the *fundamental* Liberties of the Realm :—When, therefore, to avoid that Rock, the general Direction was, (as *now* it is) to bestow Votes for Members of Parliament, according as the Candidates were known to be inclined or disinclined to the Repeal of the Test. The *Penal Laws* were indeed added ; but every one knows, *that* was only meant as a Bait to catch the Dissenters ; and if the Papists had succeeded

succeeded in a Parliament that would have taken off the Test; they would have been so far from being under any Apprehension from *Penal Laws*, that in all Probability they would have been the only Persons in the Kingdom exempt from them.

'Tis true, in the next Reign, King *William* recommended to his first Parliament, *The leaving Room for the Admission of all Protestants that were willing and able to serve.* And in pursuance of the King's Desire, a Clause was brought into the House of Lords, to take away the Necessity of receiving the Sacrament, in order to be capable of any Office, Employment, or Place of Trust; which an Historian of good Authority tells us, was rejected by a *great Majority*. When that failed, another Clause was offered, to make the receiving the Sacrament in any *Protestant Congregation*, and a Certificate thereof, a sufficient Qualification; but this also, as the same Historian tells us, was rejected by a *great Majority*. And the Reason he suggests for the Court's proposing such Clauses at that critical Juncture, is very just; The Apprehension there was, in the Infancy of the Revolution, that many of the Church of *England*, who had wished for King *William* as their Deliverer, would not be so ready to submit to him as their *Sovereign*;

vereign ; which, God be thanked, is so far from being the present Case, that no Period of Time can be assigned since the Revolution, when there was less Ground or Colour for a Suggestion of that Kind.

What the Judgment of the *Legislature* was, concerning the *Importance* of the Test Act, and of preserving it *entire*, appears from the rejecting those two Clauses by a *great Majority*, and from the special Care that was afterwards taken in the Act of Toleration, to include Dissenters under the Disabilities of it. And what was the real Judgment of King *William* and Queen *Mary* in this Matter of the Sacramental Test, considered in itself and abstracted from the Apprehension of imminent Danger to the State, appears from the Answer they returned by Pensionary *Fagel* to King *James*, when he desired their Approbation of his Design to procure a Repeal of it ‘ Their High Mighti-
 ‘ nesses (says he) do not see how it can be ex-
 ‘ pected of them, that they should consent
 ‘ to such Abrogation, to which they have so
 ‘ *just an Aversion*, as being a Thing that is
 ‘ contrary to the Laws and Customs of *all*
 ‘ Christian States, whether Protestants or Pa-
 ‘ pists, who admit none to a Share of the Go-
 ‘ vernment, or publick Employments, but
 ‘ those who profess the publick and establish-
 ‘ ed

‘ ed Religion, and endeavour to secure it
 ‘ against all Attempts whatsoever.’

By this wise Rule the Legislature proceeded in framing the Act of Toleration ; they removed the Difficulties the Dissenters were under from the Penal Laws, and provided by an express Clause, that they should continue under the Disabilities of the Test. The same Rule has had the *tacit* Approbation of all Parliaments since ; and, it is to be hoped, will not be departed from by any Parliament to come, till they see better Reasons for such Departure, than any that have hitherto appeared.

I am aware, that it has been suggested in some late Pamphlets, that by the Constitution of *Holland*, the *Armenians* are Sharers with the Calvinists in the Promotions of the State ; how truly, let the foregoing Declaration determine. Is it credible, that their Highnesses and the Pensionary should, on such a solemn Occasion and in so publick a Manner, advance an Assertion, in which they might be convicted of Falshood from the Constitution of their own Country ? As to *Scotland*, which has been mentioned as another Exception to the general Rule ; I am not knowing enough in the Laws of that Country, to say in every particular how it is
 there ;

there ; but this I do know, That not only *Ministers, Preachers, Probationers*, and all others bearing Office in any *University, College, or School*, subscribe a Declaration, ‘ That they will never ENDEAVOUR, directly or indirectly, the Prejudice or Subversion of the PRESBYTERIAN Government ;’ but that the same is also to be subscribed by the LAY ELDERS of every Parish, who may be presumed to be the Persons of best Note and Figure in their respective Parishes, and to stand fairest for Places in the State.

But to return to *England*. It may not be improper to observe, that in that Interval between the Test Act and the Revolution, an Expedient of *another* Kind was thought of, in order to give Dissenters a Capacity for Civil Offices and Employments ; I mean, the bringing them over to the Established Church. To this Purpose we find a Bill in Parliament in the Year 1673, For composing Differences in Religion, and inviting sober and peaceable-minded Dissenters into the Service of the Church ;’ and the Heads of another in the Year 1680, ‘ For the better Uniting his Majesty’s Protestant Subjects ;’ the first, relating to some Difficulties which kept Dissenting *Teachers* from conforming ; and the second, to remove some Objections which lay in the Way both to *Ministerial* and *Lay* Communion. And this, doubtless,

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was

was the regular Method ; first, to endeavour to bring them by all proper and reasonable Means to a *good liking* of both Parts of the Establishment ; and when that was effected, the Way was fairly open to an *equal Participation* of the Benefits and Advantages of both. But now, the Dissenters themselves have raised new Obstructions to this Work, or rather rendered all Attempts of that Kind impracticable. Heretofore, the only Difficulties were, in Point of *Government*, and in Point of *Worship* ; but now we are given to understand by many among them, That unless they are gratified in some *Doctrinal* Points also, they must remain at a greater Distance from us than ever. Heretofore, no Objections were made against Subscriptions to Creeds and Articles, by which the Church of *England*, and all other Protestant Churches of what Country or Denomination soever, satisfy themselves concerning the Faith of those who are to be employed in the Ministry ; but now, all Subscriptions of that Kind are openly condemned by many of the Dissenters, as Invasions of Christian Liberty, and Usurpations upon Conscience : And if there were no Difficulty either about Doctrines, or the Subscription to them ; yet their falling into the new Notion, That the Establishment of National Churches by Civil Authority, is destructive

structive of Liberty, and greatly injurious to Religion, would of itself put an End to all Expedients for their Uniting with the Established Church.

Great Complaint is made in many of the Pieces which have been written on this Occasion, that the Bishops, after the Revolution, forgot their Profession to King *James*, of a Readiness to *come to a Temper* with the Dissenters. The Truth of that Case was thus: The Seven Bishops who presented the Petition to that Prince, to excuse their not publishing his *Declaration for Liberty of Conscience* upon the Foot of a *Dispensing Power*, told him, That their Refusal to publish it, *was not for any Want of Tendernefs to Dissenters; in relation to whom they were willing to come to such a Temper, as should be thought fit, when the Matter should be considered and settled in Parliament and Convocation.* But was there no Way of coming to a *Temper* with the Dissenters, in Religion, but by letting them into Offices in the State? Does not that Declaration, to which the Petition of the Bishops refers, suspend the *Penal Laws*, and empower the Dissenters to open *publick Meeting-Houses*; and were not both these afterwards made good to them in a legal Way, by the Act of Toleration? Will it be questioned, whether the Exemption from

Tests and Oaths upon coming into Offices, which is also mentioned in that Declaration, was meant by him as a Favour to Protestants, or Papists? Upon the whole, is there the least Probability, the Circumstances of that Reign considered, that the Bishops had any Thoughts of touching the Test Act? No, what they meant, was what was afterwards done, a Relief to tender Consciences in Point of Religious Worship; and as to *Civil Offices*, no Way was thought on by the Bishops to bring Dissenters into those, but by first bringing them into the Established Church.

Thus far, the Test has been considered only as an *Exclusive* Law; let us now see the State of it as *Sacramental*. And in this Respect, it is material to observe, that it is a Test much older than the Reign of King *Charles* the Second; and that, both for exempting from temporal Penalties, and entitling to temporal Benefits. By the 3 *Fac. I.* every Recusant, besides conforming and coming to Church, is bound to receive the *Sacrament* in his Parish Church once a Year, to be exempted from the Penalties of Recusancy. And by the 7 *Fac. I.* every Person who desires to be *Naturalized* (and by that to be entitled to the temporal Advantages of Naturalization) is obliged to make Proof of his having received the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* within one
Month

Month before the Bill be exhibited in Parliament. The same Obligation to receive the Sacrament, and on the like Accounts, is repeated in the Corporation and Test-Acts; and was virtually approved by the Parliament in the Reign of King *James II.* by their Refusal to repeal it; and expressly reinforced by the Act of Toleration in the Reign of King *William*; and continued by the Act against *Occasional Conformity* in the Reign of Queen *Anne*; and left upon the ancient Foot by the Repeal of that Act in the Reign of King *George* the First. One would imagine, that if this Test were a Thing so very *abominable* as has been represented of late, the Legislatures in five successive Reigns would have seen the Abomination, and not have suffered such an *horrible Iniquity* to rest upon the Nation; at least, that they would not avowedly have approved and ratified it from Time to Time, by so many fresh and repeated Sanctions. Charity would incline one to believe, that this Point must certainly have been considered by *Them* in some other Light. Suppose their Thoughts were, That in a Christian Country it is fit and reasonable that those who are to be employed in the publick Administration, should give some publick Testimony of their being *Christians*; That from the most early Times of Christianity, the actual joining in Communion has ever been esteemed

esteemed the most proper Proof that men were Christians ; That for the Sake of publick Peace and Order, and that Church and State might be a mutual Support to each other, it was further expedient, that Persons employed in the State, should be Christians, conforming to the Worship approved and established by the State ; That Rules and Laws are not therefore bad in themselves, and to be laid aside, because bad men abuse them, and make them the Occasions of Sin ; (if that were the Case, *Oaths* must be forbidden and laid aside, because they are visibly the Occasions of much Perjury ;) That, in private Life, if a Master of a Family make a Rule, that he will entertain no Servant who does not receive the Sacrament at the three great Festivals, the Rule is good, and very fit to be continued, though some Servants may comply with it only for the Sake of keeping their Station in the Family ; That they who obtain Offices in the State, know beforehand the Conditions of keeping them ; and if they will act the Hypocrites, and not prepare themselves as they ought in the three Months which the Law allows them, nor take the Warning which the Church gives of the Danger of receiving unworthily, it is their own Fault, and at their own Peril. Their Minds are undoubtedly wicked, but the Law does not make them so.

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These, we may suppose, were the Reasonings of the Legislature in the five successive Reigns, under which the Sacramental Test was appointed and ratified; and the chief Favourers of the Dissenters, and many of the Dissenters themselves, seemed formerly to acquiesce in the Force of those Reasonings. Otherwise, no Account can be given of that Endeavour which was used in the Reign of King *William*, to make the receiving the Sacrament in their own Congregations, a sufficient Qualification for Places; nor of another Endeavour in the Reign of King *George* the First, for the like Allowance to qualify themselves for Naturalization in their own Meetings; nor of the Uneasiness of the whole Body of Dissenters, at their being debarred the Benefit of *Occasional Conformity*, and of their Zeal to procure a Repeal of the Act; nor lastly, of their actually qualifying themselves in such Numbers, by receiving the Sacrament on Account of Places. Let me add, that if others, who at this Time inveigh so loudly against the Sacramental Test, were *solely* or *chiefly* governed by a Concern for the Honour of the Ordinance, they would long ere this have proposed in its stead some *other* Pledge and Security, by which the End and Intent of the Sacramental Test might be equally attained.

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The Dissenters cannot but confess, that they have lived long in a *full Enjoyment* of their Toleration, unenvied and unmolested. Some Privileges which that Act left them in Possession of, and which were taken away in the latter End of the Reign of *Queen Anne*, were restored to them in the next Reign, by the Repeal of the *Conformity* and *Schism* Acts. — In the latter End of *Queen Anne*, some Meeting-Houses had been pulled down, and Violence offered to others; but in the first of *King George the First*, *the pulling down, or beginning to demolish or pull down, any Meeting-House, was made Felony, without Benefit of Clergy.* — It had been adjudged, that by the Act of Toleration, no Teacher, though duly qualified to officiate in one County, could legally preach in another; and because that Limitation was oft-times attended with Inconvenience, the Legislature provided against their incurring the Penalties of the Law, though they should officiate in *another County.* — By the Act of Toleration, no private Dissenters were exempted from the Penalties of Non-Conformity enacted by former Laws, but such only as had in open Sessions taken the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, and made and subscribed the Declaration of the 30th of *Charles the Second* against Popery; and because this was an Inconvenience to the
 Body

Body of the Dissenters, the Legislature did not only exempt them from the Penalties already incurred by the Neglects of such Qualification for the Time past, but also provided an easy Remedy against the like Dangers for the Time to come: So that nothing has been omitted, that could be done, to make Good to them their Toleration *to the full*, and to make it as easy as possible both to Teachers and People; that it might effectually answer the End which the Preamble of the Act sets forth, *viz. Ease to Scrupulous Consciences in the Exercise of Religion*: But the Legislature did not understand, that *Power* and *Profit* were fit Remedies for Scruples of Conscience.

I know it is alledged in Behalf of the Dissenters, that they have no ill *Intention* to the Established Church; or if they had, that their Numbers are too inconsiderable to hurt it.

To this many Things may be replied;

—That the introducing a Form of Government and Worship, very different from that of the Established Church, is what their *Judgment* and *Conscience* direct them to.

—That Men *out* of Power are not competent Judges of what their Aims and In-

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tentions

tentions may be, when *in* Power. Our Histories will not suffer us to forget the Conduct of the PRESBYTERIANS in the Reign of King *Charles* the First (whom we find, *under* Power, complaining loudly of Persecution on Account of Religion, and, *in* Power, exerting the utmost Zeal against granting so much as a Toleration to any other Sect or Persuasion;) nor the Conduct of the INDEPENDENTS in the same Reign, who fled from Persecution in *Old England*, and became the most rigid Persecutors of Quakers and Anabaptists, as well as those of the Episcopal Persuasion, in *New England*.

—That heretofore, the Assistance which the Dissenters of this Kingdom received from their Brethren of *Scotland*, completed the Design of establishing Presbytery; and they will be apt to flatter themselves, that upon a proper Opportunity the Zeal of their Neighbours of *North Britain* will not be wanting to effect the same Uniformity in Religion throughout the Island: [The Apprehension of this, as grounded upon former Experience, occasioned that strong and never to be forgotten Clause in the Act of Union, ‘ That all Laws then in Force for ‘ the *Establishment* and *Preservation* of the ‘ Church of *England*, and the Doctrine, ‘ Worship, Discipline, and Government ‘ thereof, should be *in full Force for ever*; ‘ and

and be an *essential* and *fundamental* Part of it.' This Act had before specified, by Name, the Act of Uniformity, and the Act of the 13th of *Elizabeth* for confirming the Thirty Nine Articles; which two contain the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the Church of *England*. And though it would be great Presumption to set Bounds to the Power of the Parliament of *Great Britain*; yet surely if Words have any Meaning, the *additional* Mention of Laws for the PRESERVATION of the Doctrine, &c. must refer to such *other* Laws as *fence* and *guard* that Doctrine, &c. against the Endeavours and Attempts of Enemies of all Kinds. As to *Scotland*, what the Extent of the Act is which was made in that Parliament for the Secufity of their Religion, previous to the Union, and whether the Terms in which it is conceived, amount to so *strong* and *clear* a Provision for the *Perpetuity* of all Laws then in Force for the ESTABLISHMENT and PRESERVATION of their Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, must be left to the Judgment of those, who will be at the Pains to make an exact and impartial *Comparison* of the two Acts. But this by the way.]

— That, (to come nearer our own Days) Time was when the Dissenters thought themselves completely happy in the Toleration, and *appeared* at least to have no further Views; and if they should succeed in their present Attempt, Time *may be*, when they will as little acquiesce in an Exemption from the Test Act, as they do now in their Toleration.

— That they who would now have it believed, that all they aim at, is the removing the *Incapacity* for Places; may, if they obtain that, carry their Menaces still higher, and be yet more troublesome to their Prince, if they happen to think, that in the Disposal of Favours they are not regarded in full Proportion to their *Numbers*, and *Importance*, and *great Merit* toward the Government.

— That however harmless and innocent the Intention of the *present* Dissenters may be with Regard to the Church, they cannot answer for the Intentions of the *next* Generation.

— That, according to their own Accounts in some late Writings, their Strength is very *formidable*; and if at *present*, they think themselves in a Condition to carry their Point by *Menacing*, what will they

they not enterprize when their Menaces have succeeded, and they feel their Strength, and are flushed with Victory? It would indeed be extreme Weakness in a Majority that should be able to carry this first Point, to stop there, and not go on to disarm all Opposers, and put it out of their Power to disturb them in their *Measures* for the Time to come.

— That the Strength of the Dissenters is known to lie in the *Cities* and *Boroughs*, where their Influence will always be, in Proportion to the Share they have in the *Government* of those Places; a Circumstance very fit to be attended to, when we consider how large a Proportion of Members of the House of Commons are returned from the Cities and Boroughs. And the fewer Tests there are upon the *Elected*, the greater Need there is to continue the present Restraints upon the Power and Influence of the *Electors*.

— That the Dissenters, besides their own Weight, are sure to be joined in all Attempts against the *Establishment of the Church*, by great Numbers, who will join them in *pulling down*, though in nothing else, *viz.*

1. By *Infidels*, who know how greatly their Work is obstructed, and a Sense of Religion

Religion preserved, by a regular and uniform Worship Weekly performed in every Parish Church; and whose great Leader, the late Mr. *Collins*, well knew what he was doing, when he set himself with so much Zeal to represent all Establishments in Religion as Encroachments upon the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

2. By Others, who though they disown the Name of Infidels, have been taught to believe that assembling in a publick Worship is no Part of Christianity, and that the Maintenance of a national Ministry might well be spared, and the Revenues of the Church better applied to other Uses, publick or *private*.

3. By all Those, who for Reasons best known to themselves, have entertained strong Prejudices against Bishops and Clergymen, as such, and find a particular Pleasure in any Thing that may vex or disquiet them.

And 4. By a Fourth Sort, who, blinded with those Prejudices, are so far from seeing what every unprejudiced eye must see, the Strength and Support which the Constitution in Church and State mutually afford to each other, that they have wrought themselves into a Persuasion, that as long as the Church-
Establishment

Establishment subsists, Civil Liberty cannot be safe.

These, *united*, are evidently a *Force* too formidable to be despised or neglected ; and the Dissenters must think the Friends of the Church of *England* the weakest People upon Earth, if they can suppose they will be easy and unconcerned, at seeing *that Force further* strengthened, and rendered yet more formidable, by new Additions of Power and Influence.

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